

Applicant : Edward S. Hoskins et al.
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Attorney's Docket No.: 17539-013001 / STL 9980

REMARKS

In the non-final office action mailed February 17, 2004, the Examiner allowed claims 1-25, rejected claim 26, and objected to claims 27-30. The Examiner also indicated that claims 27-30 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In response, Applicants add claims 31-36, amend claims 18, 26, 28 and 29, and cancel claim 27. As such, claims 1-26 and 28-36 are pending. Applicants request that the Examiner reconsider claims 26-30, and examine claims 31-36 in view of the amendments and the arguments below.

For the Examiner's convenience, Applicants have enclosed a copy of the Form 1449 that the Applicants filed on October 23, 2002. Applicants also request that the Examiner consider the listed references, initial the form, and provide a copy to the Applicants.

Claims 1-25: Allowed Claims

Applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claims 1-25. Applicants amend claim 18 to correct an informality (repeated word).

Claim Rejection 35 U.S.C. § 102 – Claims 26-30

The Examiner rejected claim 26 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Dobbek. The Examiner objected to claims 27-30 as being dependent on a rejected base claim, namely claim 26. Applicants submit that independent claim 26 and claims 27-30, which depend directly or indirectly from claim 26, each define an invention that is patentable over the cited reference.

However, in the interest of advancing prosecution, Applicants amend claim 26 to incorporate the subject matter of claim 27, which the Examiner has indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Having incorporated all the limitations of claim 27 in an independent claim, Applicants submit that amended claim 26 is in condition for allowance in accordance with the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Applicants cancel claim 27 and amend claims 28 and 29 to depend from amended claim 26 (instead of canceled claim 27). Applicants also amend claim 29 to correct an informality (antecedent basis).

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As such, Applicants respectfully request that amended independent claim 26, as well as claims 28-30 which depend from claim 26, be allowed.

New Claims 31-26

Applicants have added new claims 31-36. Applicants submit that these claims are allowable subject matter, and that these amendments introduce no new matter. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that these claims be allowed.

Conclusion

Applicants submit that claims 1-26 and 28-36 are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue a timely Notice of Allowance in this case for all of these claims.

Applicants also request that the Examiner mark and initial as being considered the references listed in the Form 1449 that the Applicants filed on October 23, 2002. Applicants request that the Examiner send a copy of the initialed form with the next official communication.

Applicants believe that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue, or comment does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue, or comment. In addition, because the arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Finally, nothing in this paper should be construed as intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper.

Please charge deposit account 06-1050 \$344.00 check for excess claim fees and a \$110.00 check for the Petition for Extension of Time fee. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

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Respectfully submitted,

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